

Message Text

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PAGE 01 LAGOS 09805 071254Z

53

ACTION AF-06

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NSCE-00 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00 FMC-02 INR-07

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FM AMEMBASSY LAGOS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 1480

UNCLAS LAGOS 09805

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 4)

E.O. 1162 N/A

TAGS: EWW, EPAP

SUBJECT: COCOA EXPORT SITUATION IN NIGERIA IMPROVES

REFERENCE: LAGOS 9549

1. DURING PAST WEEK EMBASSY HAD CONFERRED REPEATEDLY WITH AND ACTED AS INTERMEDIARY BETWEEN NIGERIAN MINISTRIES AND AGENCIES INVOLVED IN COCOA MARKETING AND EXPORT. WE HAVE ENCOUNERED COOPERATIVE ATITUDE AND AS OF OCTOBER 4 PORT BOTTLENECK ON COCOA SHIPMENTS APPEARS TO BE BROKEN.

2. POSITIVE NEW DEVELOPMENS INCLUDE FOLLOWING:

A. SUPREME MILITARY COUNCIL HAS AUTHORIZED BERTH NO. 3 IN APAPA/LAGOS PORT TO BE USED PRIMARILY FOR AGRICULTURAL COMMODITY EXPORTS. COCOA SHIPMENTS ALREADY BEING LOADED.

B. MINISTRY OF TRANSPORT HAS OFFERED TO RESERVE ONE MARINE BUOY FOR USE OF AGRICULTURAL EXPORTS. NIGERIAN PRODUCE MARKETING COMPANY (NPMC), GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATION WHICH CONTROLS ALL FOREIGN SALES OF AGRICULRUAL COMMODITIES, HAS ACCEPTED. MINISTRY AND NPMC NOW WORKING WITH NIGERIAN PORTS AUHORITY TO SECURE SUFFICIENT NUMBER OF LIGHTERS TO SERVICE OPERATION.

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PAGE 02 LAGOS 09805 071254Z

C. LOCAL SHIPPING REPRESENTATIVES OF AMERICAN WEST AFRICAN CONFERENCE HAVE EXPRESSED WILLINGNESS CONSIDER REMAINING IN PORT AFTER DISCHARGING AT BERTH 9 TO PICK UP COCOA AT BERTH 3. TO SAVE TURNAROUND TIME. NPMC HAS AGREED TO CLEAN AND FUMIGATE EMPTIED HOLDS IN MID-CHANNEL INSTEAD OF AT PIER. IN ADDITION, SPECIAL LOADINGS WILL TAKE PLACE AT CERTAIN TIMES AT PRIORITY BERTH 9, NORMALLY THE SCENE OF ONLY OF IMPORT UNLOADINGS WITHIN TIGHT 6-DAY LIMIT. FOR EXAMPLE, FARRELL LINES "AUSTRAL PILGRIM," DUE ARRIVE NOVEMBER 6, WILL STAY AT BERTH 9 FOR 12 DAYS AND TAKE ON COCOA.

D. COCOA LOADINGS FOR U.S. WILL BE AT LAGOS, SAPELE, PORT HARCOURT. DURING OCTOBER "ATHENS PROGRESS", "SUBIN RIVER" AND "BRETAGNE" SCHEDULED TO LOAD FOR U.S.

4. EASING OF PROBLEM COMES IN NICK OF TIME. 75 PERCENT OF NIGERIAN COCOA CROP PRODUCED IN WEST NIGERIA, PUTTING HEAVEY PRESSURE ON LAGOS AS POINT OF EXPORT. NEW CROP ESTIMATED AT 250,000 TONS DUE WITHIN NEXT FEW WEEKS. DURING PAST WEEK 2,000 TONS OF OLD CROP PACKED IN PORT WAREHOUSES WITH AT LEAST 15,000 ADDITIONAL TONS IN NEARBY SHEDS OUTSIDE PORT. FOR PAST MONTH NPMC HAS KEPT ITS FACILITIES MOBILIZED TO LOAD, BUT SUCCEEDED IN SHIPPING OUT ONLY 7,000 TONS OF COCOA UP TO OCTOBER 1.

5. FMG ATTITUDE ENCOURATING, BEST REFLECTED IN WORDS OF NPMC ACTING GENERAL MANAGER DAN FULANI TO EMBASSY OFFICERS ON OCTOBER 2: "YOUR CONCERN IS OUR CONCERN. U.S. MARKET IS NUMBER ONE. WE DON'T WISH TO LOSE OR HARM THIS MARKET IN ANY WAY." CURRENT ACTIONS MATCH WORDS.
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